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ABSTRACT

This final report discusses the activities and outcomes of a preservice teacher education master's degree program designed to prepare high quality minority teachers of students with learning, emotional, and behavioral disabilities to work with students with high-incidence disabilities and their families, who represent the cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity that characterizes large, urban areas. The project provided students from underrepresented groups, including individuals with disabilities, with the knowledge and skills needed to attain initial Florida State certification in learning disabilities (LD) and emotional disturbances (ED). Preparation efforts focused on research-based strategies for assessing and teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students with LD and ED in both special and general education settings. Twenty-seven students started, completed, and graduated from the program. Of the total, 14 graduates were minority students and 4 had a certified disability. Teachers gained knowledge and skills in communicating effectively with students with disabilities and their families as well as with other professionals. Assessment procedures, instructional methods, and collaboration and consultation approaches were learned and practiced in a variety of field experiences in schools and clinical settings. The majority of participants expressed overall satisfaction with the program and felt prepared to teach. (CR)

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Final Report (PR/Award No. H325H980100)
Grant ended (with no cost extension): September, 2002

Improving the Preparation of Personnel to Serve
Children with High-Incidence Disabilities (PR/Award No. H325H980100)
Learning, Emotional, and Behavioral Disabilities Teacher Preparation Program
(LEBD)

Executive Summary

- The program responded to the critical needs of children (and their families) with high incidence disabilities.
- Both competitive preferences were addressed in this grant program: (a) recruitment of traditionally underrepresented students for a Master's program leading to initial certification in two areas of exceptionality, learning disabilities (LD) and emotional and behavioral disabilities (EH) and (b) demonstration that a majority of University of Miami (UM) special education graduates are teaching in high poverty inner-city areas.
- The program focused on using research-based strategies for assessing and teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students with learning, emotional and behavioral disabilities.
- The students completed coursework, field experiences and attended seminars.
- 27 students *started, completed and graduated* from the program. Of these, 14 students received 95% tuition support (federal funds) for their entire (30 + credits) program of study. The remainder received tuition support from UM in-kind contribution and/or received federal funds for up to 3-12 credits or received funds from other sources. 15 (55%) graduates had baccalaureate degrees in applied social sciences. 13 (50%) graduates were minority students. 4 (15%) graduates had a certified disability. Thus, 65% of the students were from underrepresented groups including individuals with disabilities.
- Graduates of this program were certified in learning disabilities (LD) and emotional/behavioral disabilities (EH).
- 15 additional students started the program under this grant-supported program and are continuing in the program. These students received funding from a variety of sources, including federal monies from this grant.
- A total of 42 students started the program under this grant period. The program met its target of recruiting 30 students to train in special education

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Project Status

SUMMARY

The purpose of this preservice teacher education program was to prepare high quality minority teachers of students with learning, emotional, and behavioral disabilities to work with students with high-incidence disabilities and their families who represent the cultural and linguistic diversity that characterizes large, urban areas. Both competitive preferences were addressed in this grant program: (a) recruitment of traditionally underrepresented students for a Master's program leading to initial certification in two areas of exceptionality, learning disabilities (LD) and emotional and behavioral disabilities (EH) and (b) demonstration that a majority of University of Miami (UM) special education graduates are teaching in high poverty inner-city areas, e.g., Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS). The focus was on multidisciplinary training, collaboration among public and private agencies, and culturally competent service delivery to students with disabilities and their families to reflect the needs articulated by the Florida Comprehensive System of Personnel Preparation.

This project provided students from underrepresented groups including individuals with disabilities with knowledge and skills needed to attain initial Florida State certification in LD and EH (as reflected in the State of Florida competencies). Preparation efforts focused on research-based strategies for assessing and teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students with LD and EH in both special and general education settings. Teachers gained knowledge and skills in communicating effectively with students with disabilities and their families as well as with other professionals. Assessment procedures, instructional methods, and collaboration and consultation approaches were learned and practiced in a variety of field experiences in schools and clinical settings.

OBJECTIVES

1. To recruit 30 minority students with baccalaureate degrees in applied social sciences into special education, and to graduate them with a Master's Degree that meets State of Florida certification requirements in LD and EH.

Activities:

The following efforts were made to recruit students from underrepresented groups in South Florida:

- Fliers were sent to and posted in:
  - Colleges and universities in the South Florida area, with special emphasis on traditionally minority institutions that do not have graduate programs in special education.
  - The offices of staff development in local child welfare and service delivery agencies
  - The Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

- Direct mailings were made to:
  - University of Miami seniors and graduating undergraduate students.
  - Selected GRE test takers (local).

- Grant award announcements appeared in:
  - The Miami Herald
  - The Miami Hurricane, the University of Miami college newspaper.
  - In-house newsletter (Sun Times) of the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources (FDLRS), a regional resource center for special educators.
  - UM Chalkboard, a University of Miami newsletter mailed directly to Miami-Dade County Public School teachers.
  - The Department of Education at the University of Miami has hired a full time staff member to assist in graduate recruitment and to promote the School of Education at-large. Attached is a copy of its recruitment efforts and plan in this past year.

Recruitment for the program was slow initially but accelerated soon thereafter.

Outcomes:

- 27 students *started, completed and graduated* from the program.
  - Of these, 14 students received 95% tuition support (federal funds) for their entire (30 + credits) program of study.
  - The remainder (13 students) received tuition support from UM in-kind contribution and/or received federal funds for up to 3-12 credits or received funds from other sources.
  - 14 (50%) graduates were minority students.
  - 4 (15%) graduates had a certified disability.
  - 15 (55%) graduates had baccalaureate degrees in applied social sciences.
- 4 students started and later withdrew/dropped from the program.
- 15 additional students started the program under this grant-supported program and are continuing in the program. These students received funding from a variety of sources, including federal monies from this grant.

2. To prepare Master's level teachers of students with LEBD focusing on cultural or linguistic diversity and the developing child within the family context.

Activities:

The students completed the Florida State and NCATE approved program in Emotional Handicaps and Learning Disabilities. The students were required to take an introductory course in the theories and practices of teaching children with English as their second language (TESOL). Additionally, several of the other courses had the TESOL components infused in their contents.

The students were also required to attend at least two seminars or workshops each semester. Several of these focused on the cultural and linguistic diversity and the developing child with the family context.

The Project Coordinator and Project Director met with students individually to develop their program of study. The students were also required to attend two program meetings each semester where issues pertaining to the program, to scholarships and tuition support, field placements, upcoming seminars and conferences, teacher certification requirements, and issues relating to the department and graduate school requirements were discussed. Registration was completed at these meetings for the following semester. Additionally, the Project Coordinator was in regular contact with students via e-mail and met with the students as and when necessary.

Outcomes:
During the grant period, students completed their program of study, attended at least two seminars/workshops, and attended the program meetings each semester.

3. To prepare teachers who are able to apply diagnostic-prescriptive teaching; competently participate in the team approach to assessment and instruction; work effectively with other professionals, parents and community agencies; develop and select appropriate assessment and instructional materials; and apply psychological and educational principles in teaching students with learning and behavioral disabilities.

Activities:
- All courses required students to write term papers that incorporated new knowledge to encourage students to work from a solid base of conceptual framework, research and best practice.
- Students took the course "Microcomputer Applications in Education" to prepare them to use computers, high-tech equipment and media resources successfully.
- The students used the School of Education's state-of-the-art computer lab.
- The students used the School of Education's assessment lab that has new and updated assessment materials.
- In addition to coursework and seminars, students completed 8 site visits and two 40-hour field experiences. Also, some graduate courses required field experiences. Additionally, students completed a 15-week Associate Teaching experience at the end of their course work.

Outcomes:
- Students gained knowledge and related research to practice.
- Students became familiar with computer-based teaching and learning.
- Graduates of the program completed their site-visits, field experiences and Associate Teaching experiences.

4. To examine the efficacy of this Master's degree teacher preparation program in LEBD.

Activities:

A ten-year follow-up survey of previous graduates of the LEBD Master's program was conducted to assess the efficacy of the program as it has evolved over the course of three previous personnel preparation grants in this area. Data from these surveys provide baseline data on students' job placement in the state of Florida and nationally, their perceptions of their preparation, and their perceptions of their ability to meet the competencies required in the fields of emotional handicaps and learning disabilities.

100 surveys were mailed to graduates of the LEBD program in June 1999. A second mailing was done in November 1999. 39 graduates completed and returned the surveys. Data from those who responded is as follows:

- 29 (75 %) continue to work in the area of special education as special education teachers or administrators. 2 graduates are in general education and 4 work in a related field.
- 36 (92 %) took and passed the professional Florida Teacher Certification Examination.
- 34 (87%) took and passed the subject area Florida Teacher Certification Examination.
- 30 (79 %) are employed in the State of Florida with the majority being in the Miami-Dade county area.
- 21 (54%) are from minority backgrounds.
- 30 (77%) felt competent in assessing the learning needs of students in the classroom.
- 31 (80%) felt competent in formulating appropriate goals and objectives for their students.
- 29 (74 %) agreed with the overall design of the LEBD Master's program.

Additionally, an Advisory Board meeting was held every year. Committee members represented past and present students, the ESE department of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the University of Miami special education department and representatives from special education community affiliates. The committee provided feedback about the efficacy of the program and how it meets the need of the local school district.

Listed below are the names and titles of members of the Advisory Board:
Dr. Liz Rothlein, Associate Dean, School of Education, University of Miami
Dr. Jeanne Schumm, Chair, School of Education, University of Miami
Ms. Brucie Ball, ESE, M-DCPS (local school district)
Mr. Ronald Felton, ESE, M-DCPS (local school district)
Ms. Denise Gudwin, ESE, M-DCPS (local school district)
Dr. Ann Bessell, Parent of a child with a learning disability
Dr. Marcello Castro, Research Associate, Mailman Center, University of Miami
Dr. Robert Fifer, Director, Audiology, Mailman Center, University of Miami
Ms. Suzanne Diamond, Graduate student with a learning disability
Dr. Marjorie Montague, Program Director, EH/LD and R/LD, School of Education

Fionelle Fonseca, Project Coordinator, EH/LD and R/LD, School of Education
In addition, four students currently in the program were invited to attend.

An 'exit interview' was conducted for the graduates of this program. At this interview, the students reported overall satisfaction with the program. Of the 27 graduates, 18 (67%) graduates are in full time teaching positions, 3 in part-time/substitute teaching or in another related position, 2 students joined the doctoral program, and no information is available on the remaining four. One student returned to attend the Summer Mentoring program, a mentorship program for first year teachers.

In addition, each year, the School of Education administers a questionnaire to students currently registered in the different graduate education programs. Feedback from this survey is used to enhance the programs.

Outcomes:

- The majority of graduates who could be contacted work in special education. They expressed an overall satisfaction with the design of the LEBD Master's program and felt prepared to teach.
- Feedback from the annual survey administered by the School of Education and from the Advisory Committee reported satisfaction with the program.

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